1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

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in the pieces of clothing which have all been brought and which must be thrown into the grave. " Everything must *hefemula*, breathe its last, just the same as the deceased," said Spoon. "It is taboo." No iron must be put into the grave. Iron, black iron, is *ndjoba* ; it is dangerous to the deceased, because it does not decay as quickly as the corpse, the rugs and the mats... It must not be buried. Copper and brass still less! Because they do not even change colour. " These would call Death to the village because they remain shining ; they would shine for Death and point out other people of the kraal saying : Kill!" (Viguet) Copper and brass bracelets as well as white snuff boxes are called *nhlale*, not *ndjoba* (1).

It is interesting to notice how the different belongings of the dead are dealt with, and where they are put. There are two categories. Some must disappear with the deceased, some will be kept.

To the first category belong above all his rugs ; they are wrapped round his body. He sleeps in them ; they must not be tied, however, because it is taboo to tie a corpse ; the spirit, *shikwemba*, would become angry at being imprisoned and would cause evil (2). The mats are spread in the first hole, as well as the old jackets and trousers, because there the deceased will come and sit on them, when he goes out of his hut to rest in his square. The earthen pots, especially the old ones, are broken on the grave afterwards " to show anger against death " (Elias). The mug, which is one of them, may be occasionally put on the grave, pierced at the bottom, and offerings of beer will be poured into it later on for the dead. All these perishables are to die with him. They are called his filth (thyaka ra yena). Objects of the first category are sometimes burnt in the Northern clans.

(1) It is sometimes a matter of discussion to know what is *ndjoba* and what is not. I saw the digger tear off the buttons from the trousers of Sokis, when he was cutting them through, and throw them out of the grave. An old woman, thinking perhaps that they were not of such an incorruptible nature as iron, put them in again, and again he threw them out.

(2) It would even seem that no knot must enter a grave. Two bits of skin tied together and forming the clothing of Sokis round the loins were first untied and then thrown into the grave.

805 sky, and say: "We shall meet when the sun has reached that spot." It may be in the morning, at the time "when the rays of the sun begin to pierce" (tlhaba-sana); at noon, nhlekanhin "when the sun is in the middle of its course;" in the afternoon, *hi mfenya*, say the Rongas "when the sea breeze comes up", as is the case almost every day; or "when the sun is going down" (ndjenga) (1). It must be added that the sun is rarely hidden in these lands of light.

As regards the counting of days, they have special names for to-morrow (mundjuku), the day after to-morrow (mundlwana), and the three following days; for the third day, pambari; the fourth, wo dlankambane, viz., the one when the travellers going on a business journey break the plate in order to be obliged to come home (p. 144); for the fifth, wa tiki- tiki. Tolo, is yesterday; tolwen, the day before yesterday; tolwen wa hase, the day preceding the day before yesterday; ñanwaka, this year; hashau, next year; nweshemu, last year; ñwaka lowo, the year before last. One hardly counts days, or years, beyond this point (2).

802 One occasion on which arithmetical skill, or at least the faculty of addition, is specially required, is the counting of the lobolo, when this consists of hoes. Then the tens are carefully piled up separately, the whole family witnessing the operation, but this can hardly be called a mathematical achievement.

So, on the whole, opportunities of using the arithmetical

823 (1) If this use of the sun as a means of fixing the time inevitably leads to a want of precision, it has on the other hand, created a wonderful sense of direction amongst the Natives. They never lose sight of the North, they always know where the sun rises and sets, and this is no doubt the secret of their instinct. When travelling with them, it is not necessary to consult the compass; I would rather put my fate in their hands, knowing that they will not make any mistakes as regards direction (they will certainly make many as regards distance), as they say their *hearts* (timbilu, the same word employed for genius and instinct), viz., their subconscious powers, help them better than our instruments in the midst of the African bush; not to mention their knowledge of native paths. These powers have been cultivated by the constant observation of the sun.

(2) In my Grammaire Ronga, another list of names of the days following to-day is given, containing as many as 7. This seems to be the Ronga version, whilst that here given is the Djonga. However, in neither case is the list in constant and common use. It is known only to certain individuals who look on it more or less as a curiosity. To count days further than the day after to-morrow is quite unusual.

which has lost its strength that its "moya" has gone. It is also the moya which gives their potency to medical charms. 821 822

Another word for wind is *mheho*. Strong winds are called *shidzedze*. When they break trees and damage the mealies they are attributed to baloyi, wizards, who fight during the night, quarelling over the cobs.

One frequently hears about *timheho ta mune*, the four winds. They are called: *Ñwalungu*, the north wind, (a curious word perhaps connected with Balungu, the White men; see later on); *Nyingitimu* (Ro.), or *Djonga* (Dj.), the South wind; *Mupfanyaka*, the one coming from the plain of the black earth, the West Wind; *Mfenya*, the sea breeze, coming from the East. Sailors who are great connoisseurs in this domain distinguish further the South Westerly wind, which they call *Mfenyakulu*, the great Mfenya. In Shiluvane, the West wind, which sometimes blows with great violence, coming down from the mountains of the Transvaal Plateau, is called *Buruwa*, place of habitation of the Ba-Rwa (bu, locative prefix indicating a country). (Compare I. p. 18). Two other terms of the bu-ma class, also applied to East and West in all the clans, are: *Busha*, the spot where the sun rises (ku sha), the East, and *Bupeladambu*, the spot where the sun sets, the West. So there is no doubt that the Thongas possess the idea of the four cardinal points. 821 823 132

2) Native Geography.

The geographical notions of the tribe are, on the other hand, very scanty. As a rule, they do not think it possible to know a country, or place, where they have not travelled. Every one must compile his own geography. Hunters, and men engaged in commercial journeys, had some knowledge of the Spelonken (Bvesha), of Pietermaritzburg (Umgungundhlovu), of Kimberley (Dayiman), and now practically every grown-up Thonga has been to Johannesburg (Nkamben). But those who have always remained at home, women especially, show gross ignorance regarding their own country. I met some who were totally ignorant of the fact that the Nkomati River, which leaves the 823 815

823 Transvaal at Komati Poort (a place known to all), was the same as
315 the Nkomati which enters the sea near Morakwen, northwards of Lourenço Marques, at a distance of 60 miles from Komati Poort. It must be said, in excuse for them, that in Morakwen the river is called Morako (locative Morakwen) and thus many people have never been aware of the identity of the two!

If you wish to impress Natives greatly with your knowledge, tell them the names of all the countries of Thongaland in their geographical order, as you may have learnt them in conversation, or by studying the map. They will be amazed, and say: "What a wonderful traveller you are, knowing so many spots so far distant from each other!" The teaching of Geography in the schools tends, of course, to alter this state of things.

3) Earthquakes and Rainbows.

823 Earthquakes are not frequent in this part of the world; so they are rarely spoken of. Thongas have, however, a name for them, *shimbeti*. They do not give any explanation of them and believe that they are perhaps caused by the gods. I remember having once heard a mysterious sound accompanied by a slight tremor of the soil. It was during the Boer war and was, I think, caused by the blowing up of a bridge somewhere on the other side of the range. All the Natives covered their heads with their hands and seemed greatly impressed.

821 The *rainbow* is called *shikwangulatilo*, viz., the one which
778 removes the danger from the sky. Notice the stem *kwangula*, to inaugurate, which we have already met with, when dealing with pottery (p. 117). The sky after rain is compared to a new pot, from which the *nkangu* must be removed. But this is merely an expression. No one can say what the danger is that is thus removed; it is probable that the tribe had more precise ideas on the subject in former times, and that these have become obsolete. In some of the northern clans (Nkhabelane, Mathiye, Shiburi, Mongwe) the rainbow is called the Bow of Nyandziyo. Nyandziyo is said to be a man of the olden times who made the

to the sacrifice of the black victim and to the mbelele rite of purification of the land, which are characteristic Thonga customs, it seems that another old Thonga way of obtaining rain was the *tjeba fishing* which I described on p. 86. When the whole clan had gone to catch the barbels in the almost dried up ponds, a thunderstorm would come and rain would fall. This was especially the case with certain small lakes such as Malangotiba in Nondwane, and that in Nsime near Morakwen, because battles had taken place on their borders and the enemies' corpses had been thrown into the water. So these lakes had become "great sacred woods" (ntimu). I suppose the spirits of the deceased, which were certainly "gods of bitterness," (see next chapter), were supposed to prevent the rain, and the *tjeba* either appeased them or made them powerless.

To sum up this very complicated subject, I would say rain rites belong to three different categories: 1) The religious rites connected with ancestor worship (black offering, visit to the sacred woods, old songs and sometimes offering of a human victim). 2) Rites of purification of the land, those which are derived from the mysterious relations established between the power of Heaven and abnormal births (mbelele, cleaning of wells by women accompanied by the mother of twins); these present some features of the ordinary passage rites, either because the fall of rain inaugurates a new season, or because drought is a calamity comparable with death and attended with contamination. 3) The magic rites, in which sea charms play the most important part.

Hail, shihangu (Dj.), mabyana, lit. little stones (Ro.), is frequent in Thongaland; according to Mboza, it is not the object of any peculiar superstitions. Amongst the Pedis the day on which it has fallen must be kept as a sabbath. It is taboo to till the fields on that day.

IV. *The Inorganic World.*

Water is called *mati*, a noun of the bu-ma class, the class of liquids, employed only in the plural form. Notice the suffix *ti*, which seems to show that, at a period when mythological

193 conceptions were still current, it was considered as a feminine principle. This supposition is confirmed by the fact that *rivers* (nambu. pl. milambu) also have the feminine termination (I. p. 36, Note). I find the following names of rivers ending in *ti* : Nkomati, Nfoloti (Umbelosi), Ñwebeti, Shalati, Timbati ; the termination *etsi, edzi*, may be another form of the same suffix (Ñwanetsi, Ntsatsi, Shingwedzi, Madzi, etc.). A very curious fact, which shows the same conception, is that the river which crosses the territory of the Tembe clan is called Mi-Tembe. I first thought this to be a plural form of the mu-mi class ; but it is more natural to explain this *mi* as the feminine prefix (1) which means daughter of, as Migogwe, etc. (I. p. 352).

823 784 824 789 133 *Crossing rivers* is subject to a curious rule. It is taboo to bathe in the stream before crossing it ; taboo also for the traveller to cook his food on the hither side of the river ; he must first cross, and then take his meal. This rule is still universally observed by waggon trekkers in South Africa. In this case there may be a reason for the taboo : South African rivers are apt to be swollen in a moment by sudden rain, and the crossing made impossible for days : the traveller therefore makes haste ; he will have plenty of time to stop on the other side! When the river is dangerous, a Thonga will first chew (phora) a little of his *ndjao*, the root of a juncus, which is supposed to increase courage and to ensure victory over hostile influences. (See Part VI.)

823 769 776 782 Some *Lakes* and *Rivers* are believed to be inhabited by spirits, but not in the ordinary fetichistic way, in which a special spiritual being is incorporated with the natural object ; these spirits are *psikwembo*, spirits of the deceased ancestors of the owners of the land, and are propitiated by their descendants. Should another clan have invaded the territory where these lakes are, and crocodiles threaten the fishermen, (p. 88) they will call some one belonging to the clan of the old possessors of the country and ask him to make an offering to appease *his* gods. This is the ordinary course, and the more closely we search the more completely these lake and

(1) A number of river names have the prefix *li* or *ri*, especially those which are of Sutho origin : Lebvubye. Ritabi (Letaba) Ritshindjele (Letsitele), Rimbelule (Lepalule, Olifant). Others begin with *ñwa, ma*, and may be ancient names of men.

river spirits become identified with ancestor-gods. In my investigations I found one case, however, where a special spirit, a kind of Nature spirit seemed to be invoked. This was on the sea shore, in the northern part of Nondwane, at a place called Mahilane, where there are two great rocks on the beach. When the great waves dash against them, with a fearful roar, people go and sacrifice (hahla) ; they pray thus : "Tsu! Oh sea! Let vessels be wrecked, and steamers also, and let their riches come to us and help us." In former times, a young girl was sometimes exposed there as a prey, or an offering to the power of Mahilane. Now this is exactly what is done in the sacred woods for the ancestor gods and, in fact, Mboza asserts that : "When abandoning the girl, the officiant says : You, Psikwembo, ancestor-gods, drive on the sea that it may wreck vessels."

When urged to speak with more precision, my informant answered : "Mahilane and the sea are one and the same thing (ntshumu munwe). When the sea is roaring people exclaim : 'Mahilane roars'! Near the island of Shefin, where two branches of the Nkomati river meet in the estuary, people say : 'Makaneta is roaring'. Here it is Makaneta and no longer Mahilane."

This information is extremely interesting. As regards Makaneta, we know him perfectly well ; he is the ancestor of Mboza and descendant of Mazwaya (I. p. 360). This ancestor-god begins to be confused with a natural phenomenon taking place in the country where he lived. The religious fear of the spirit of the deceased mingles with the awe inspired by the roaring of the sea to such an extent that both notions coincide in the imagination of the savage. We here note the exact point where *an ancestral spirit evolves into a Nature spirit*, and this instance proves, in the clearest possible manner, that the conception of the ancestor spirit preceded that of the Nature spirit. Here, at any rate, Ancestrolatry is anterior to both Fetichism and Naturism. These later forms of the belief can be easily accounted for by the development of Ancestrolatry : the reverse process would be much more difficult to explain.

The *sea*, with its immensity and its wonderful power, deeply impresses the Thongas dwelling near it. They do not however tell many stories about it, nor did I hear of any explanation

823 regarding its confines and the shore on the other side. Some
791 magicians claim to have gone and stayed for some time down in the depths : to have "crossed the sea" is for them a kind of diploma, which gives them the right of exercising their art. (See Chapter III.)

828 The *tide* (byaela) is considered to be caused by a whale (nkomu) which alternately swallows and vomits the sea-water : this is the common idea. Some Natives, however, connect it with the moon, having noticed that the tide is higher at full moon and at the wane.

The sea must be feared : it is jealous. "When some one is taken away by the great wave, do not shout! Do not exclaim : 'He is lost!', else you will never see him again. On the contrary, if you say : 'All right, let him go', then the returning wave will bring him back." These are the assertions of Spoon. And old Makhani expressed his approval by nodding his head!

372 "It is the same with *fire*," Spoon also remarked. There was
784 a terrible bush fire in Rikatla on the 18th of September 1908. As always happens at the end of winter, the bush was absolutely dry. A leper woman, tilling her fields, wished to cook a little manioc. The fire leapt to the weeds which she had gathered and from these to the bush. Two huts were burnt. "It is their own fault," said Spoon, "when the bush fire comes you must put it out quietly. If you make any noise, if you shout, it comes straight at you. That is what happened. In the first village people fought calmly and succeeded in saving their huts. At Jeck's village, they cried out. The fire leapt on to a hut, the small hut of the son. The mother cried : 'Yo! yo! Where shall I put my child?' She went on crying out until the hut was burnt to the ground. So the fire leapt on to the big hut and burnt it. She has only herself to blame!" (1)

823 The origin of *stones* is absolutely unknown. Pikinini, a Nkuna boy, who was endowed with an extraordinary imagination, once drew my attention to the stratification of a large dolomite boulder on which different concentric layers were visible, and said to me :

[521] (1) Silence is always recommended to prevent misfortune : in the case of war (I, p. 470) women at home must keep silent ; likewise when the husband is hunting hippopotami (p. 69), when a child is seized with convulsions owing to the power of *tilo* (heaven). See also my remarks on the kunga rite. (I, p. 124).

"You see! Stones also grow!" Another Native geologist, who had heard the European story of creation, coming from the Coast, a country of sand and sand only, and visiting the Drakensberg Mountains near Shiluvane, was amazed by the enormous cliffs of the Mamotswiri and gave vent to the following reflection: "No wonder we have no stones in our sandy land. When God created the earth, he used them all to build these mountains!" 823

Fossils are rare in Thongaland, where sand covers almost the whole country. There is however in the southern part of the Maputju region an outcrop of cretaceous rock which belongs to the Gault and which contains ammonites, Nautillus etc. Natives call them *nsongo stones* and are very much afraid of them. They say that "these stones with ribs" can walk. They bring bad luck (singita). Should a child pick up one of these fossils and bring it into the village, he will fall ill; he must therefore undergo a special treatment. 136 823 777

Crystal greatly pleases the Natives. It is rare in South Africa. When magicians can secure a white or a black crystal they generally wear it round their necks together with the claws, or teeth, of wild animals, or with their little skin bags which they use as amulets. For this reason I once had the good fortune to be able to exchange a crystal I had brought from Switzerland for one of these charms! 135 301

The *earth* (misaba) is also a great and important thing. First because it is identified with the people dwelling on it, with the clan. *Tiko*, the land, means both the soil and the people. Further than this, the earth is the chief (I. p. 382); hence many laws: e. g. the tusk of the elephant which fell on the earth when the beast was killed, belongs to the chief, etc. (p. 57). The most solemn oath is that which is taken with earth (ku funga u hahla hi misaba). Should a man be accused of stealing or of being a wizard, if he puts a little earth in his mouth, says *tsu*, and declares: "I do not know anything about it," those who care for his safety will look for a medicine-man to treat him: it is a *mondjo* (a magical method of divination. See Chapter III). The same thing is done when an oath has been taken by sucking a piece of iron. 823 695 787

A curious superstition regarding the earth is this: after moving from one country to another, you should for some days mix with 823

your food a little of the earth of the country which you have left ; this will provide the transition between the old and the new domicile (See I. p. 49). 823

Metals known to the tribe before the coming of the Whites were few. (See page 137). *Nhumbu* or *nsimbi*, iron, *nsuku*, copper, and *ntchopfa*, a name applied to all white metals (tin, silver, etc.) are the only Native names for metals. There is no word for gold. 135

V. *The Vegetable World. Thonga Botany.*

While Bantus possess a very limited knowledge of Astronomy, Geography, Mineralogy, etc., while their ideas in these domains are in no way deserving of the name of Science, they are much more advanced as regards Plants. Here it is quite allowable to speak of a Science, a rudimentary Science, no doubt, but a true, precise knowledge which has been transmitted from past ages and which denotes a real power of observation. 815

The Delagoa flora is not very rich. I have succeeded in collecting between four and five hundred different kinds in a herbarium which I sent many years ago for classification to the Herbier Boissier in Geneva. In February 1893, before forwarding the second lot of exsiccata, I gathered together some Natives of Rikatla in the hut which I had pompously styled a Museum and, having promised them 1 s. each if they consented to remain till the end of the examination, I submitted the dried plants to them, asking them their names, their uses, etc. The result of the inquiry was marvellous. My arecopegus did not seem to be a very choice one : an old woman, as dry as my exsiccata and smoking her pipe, another with ochre-smeared hair, a young one, with a baby on her shoulder, an elderly one-eyed man named Hamunde, my milkman. After them came the young chief Muzila, walking slowly, swinging the tails of his belt. This chief, notwithstanding his social rank, showed gross ignorance of botany ; but some of the others knew the name of almost every plant ; had I had a *ñanga*, a medicine-man, amongst them, I am sure I should have obtained 137 124 815 815 756 824

hlulawumbe grows, (Hlulawumbe means to overcome others) (1). 000

Offerings of the Medicine-men. The Native physicians are, as 782
has already been pointed out, very pious. Their art having been 756
handed down to them by their forefathers, as a family secret, they 484
always implore the blessing of their ancestors on their various treatments. This is done by true offerings, performed with the *tsu* and a liturgical prayer. In Vol. I. p. 55, the religious ceremony which accompanies the monthly vapour bath administered to infants was described ; a religious rite takes place also in the hondola of the weaning (I. p. 59). These are typical cases. Another offering of the same nature is made on behalf of the man who is about to *start out on a journey*, for instance to Johannesburg. The doctor, having prepared the protective drugs in a pot, brings them to the entrance of the traveller's hut, and calls his "patient,"; then, taking a little of the decoction in his mouth, he spits it at him with the sacramental *tsu*, and prays in the following words :

Akhwari! Abusayi! Ndji hlaya psolepso! Khongelwa a nga dlawi. Ku dlawa phalaburena! Khombo a dji suke, dji ya ka Shiburi, dji ya ka Nkhabelane! A a fambe psinene, a kandjetela balala, mitwa mi yetlele, ku yetlela ni tindjau. A a ye nwa mati ya kone, ma mu tjhabisa hi djo tluka ledji.

Gently! Smoothly! I say so. Death does not come to him for whom prayer is made ; death only comes to him who trusts in his own strength! Let misfortune depart, let it go to Shiburi, and Nkhabelane (2). Let him travel safely ; let him trample on his enemies ; let thorns sleep, let lions sleep ; let him drink water wherever he goes, and let that water make him happy, by the strength of this leaf (viz., of my medicinal herbs).

(1) I may mention here another religious ceremony which is also called a mhamba, though I am not sure that a regular prayer is offered. It is the *Offering of a Stone.* Stones are almost totally lacking in Thongaland. But on the Swazi border, in the Lebombo hills, there are porphyreous rocks, and when a Native passes a certain spot, on the Estatmen road, he picks up a stone, spits on it, touches both his knees with it and throws it on a heap made of the stones thrown by those who passed before him. This heap of stones is called *shittlane.* This rite is said to be performed in order to call a blessing on the journey ; thus the traveller will find a favourable reception in the villages and be given plenty of food. This custom is wide-spread in many other tribes. 135 823 782 484

(2) The extremity of the land (Comp. I, p. 55).